

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 IO-13 ISO-00 PER-01 CPR-01 SSC-01 CIAE-00
DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05
PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 AID-05 COME-00 EB-08
FRB-03 TRSE-00 XMB-02 OPIC-03 LAB-04 SIL-01
OMB-01 /102 W

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R 310610Z MAR 78
FM AMEMBASSY COLOMBO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9943
INFO AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD
AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

C O N F I D E N T I A L COLOMBO 1466

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PDIP, PEPR, MV
SUBJECT: PRESENTATION OF CREDENTIALS TO REPUBLIC OF MALDIVES

1. THE AMBASSADOR SENT THE FOLLOWING MESSAGE FROM THE
MALDIVES FOR TRANSMISSION TO THE DEPARTMENT.

2. ACCOMPANIED TO PRESIDENTIAL OFFICE BY NAVAL
AIDE THOMAS WEISS, I WAS CONDUCTED BY MINISTRY OF
EXTERNAL AFFAIRS LAUNCH FROM THE USNS WILKES TO
PRESIDENTIAL QUAY FOR PRESENTATION OF CREDENTIALS
ON MARCH 28. I WAS MET BY M. ZAHIR, PRESIDENTIAL
PRIVATE SECRETARY. PRESENT FOR THE PRESENTATION WERE
HUSSAIN HALEEM, UNDERSECRETARY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
AND ZAHIR NASEER, PRESIDENTIAL INTERPRETER.

3. THE PRESIDENT IS A BRIGHT-EYED, INTELLIGENT,
WEWY-BUILT MAN OF MEDIUM HEIGHT WITH SLIGHTLY
GREYING HAIR. ALTHOUGH HE DEALT ENTIRELY THROUGH AN
INTERPRETER HIS FACE REVEALED HIS SUBSTANTIAL
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UNDERSTANDING OF ENGLISH. HE SEEMED SHREWD, BALANCED,
REASONABLE AND WELL-BRIEFED. HE IS CAUTIOUS BUT ONCE
HE IS CLEAR IN WHICH DIRECTION HE WANTS TO GO, HE SHOWS
COURAGE AND BOLDNESS. STEP BY STEP HE IS DRAWING THE
MALDIVES OUT OF ITS AGE-OLD ISOLATION AND ITS FORMER
DEPENDENCE ON ONE FOREIGN EXCHANGE EARNER-MALDIVE FISH.
WE DISCUSSED THE FOLLOWING POINTS:

4. I EXPLAINED MY LONGSTANDING INTEREST FOR TWENTY YEARS TO COME TO THE MALDIVES AND WAS THEREFORE DELIGHTED FINALLY TO ARRIVE JUST BEFORE THEIR NATIONAL DAY, TO BE CELEBRATED MARCH 29. HE NOTED WITH PRIDE THAT TWENTY YEARS AGO HE HAD ALREADY BEEN PRINCIPAL MINISTER AND I INFERRED HE DRAW CONSIDERABLE SATISFACTION FROM THE FACT THAT HE HAD BEEN OVER TWENTY YEARS IN EFFECTIVE CONTROL HERE. AFTER FURTHER PRELIMINARY NICETIES I GOT DOWN TO BUSINESS.

5. I REPORTED OUR DESIRE TO NAME A CONSULAR AGENT OF MALDIVIAN NATIONALITY AND HOPED HE WOULD APPROVE. HE READILY AGREED, INDICATING THEY WANTED TO MAKE IT AS EASY AS POSSIBLE FOR FOREIGN GOVERNMENTS TO DEAL WITH THE PROBLEMS THEIR NATIONALS UNWITTINGLY CREATED FOR THEMSELVES, FOR THE MALDIVIAN GOVERNMENT, OR IN THIS INSTANCE THE USG. IN ADDITION TO ASSISTING IN HELPING TOURISTS OUT OF TROUBLE, I SUGGESTED IT WOULD SIMPLIFY OUR ISSUING VISAS TO U.S.-BOUND MALDIVIANS. WHEN WE WERE CLEAR ON THE INDIVIDUAL WE WISHED TO NAME, WE WOULD CONSULT HIS GOVERNMENT ONCE MORE. HE SEEMED GENERALLY SATISFIED WITH OUR PROPOSED ARRANGMENT. I ALSO THANKED HIS GOVERNMENT FOR ITS COOPERATION ONCE WE BOTH WERE AWARE OF THE PROBLEM OF MR. OSTROW.
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6. IN FOLLOWING UP ON THIS SUBJECT I SUGGESTED IT WOULD BE WELCOMED IN THE U.S. IF THE MALDIVIAN GOVERNMENT WOULD AGAIN ACCREDIT THEIR UN PERMREP AS CONCURRENT AMBASSADOR TO WASHINGTON. HE RECALLED THEY HAD HAD A SIMILAR ARRANGEMENT ONCE BEFORE AND OBSERVED THEY WERE SERIOUSLY CONSIDERING DOING SO AGAIN. I NOTED THAT A NUMBER OF OTHER COUNTRIES DID THAT; NEW YORK WAS ONLY AN HOUR FROM WASHINGTON AND MUCH BUSINESS COULD BE DONE OVER THE PHONE IF HE WERE SO ACCREDITED.

7. IN REGARD TO AMERICAN INVESTMENT WHICH I UNDERSTOOD THEY WOULD WELCOME, I REFERRED TO EARLIER CONVERSATIONS WITH EMBASSY REPRESENTATIVES REGARDING THE USEFUL EFFORTS OF COMPLETING AN OPIC AGREEMENT. HE WAS AWARE THAT WE HAD PROVIDED A DRAFT AGREEMENT BUT THAT HIS GOVERNMENT WAS NOT SURE OF ITS IMPORT. I SUGGESTED THAT IF THEY WISHED, I WOULD ENCOURAGE A SPOKESMAN FROM OPIC TO VISIT MALE SHOULD HE BE IN THIS AREA ON OTHER BUSINESS. HE REPLIED THAT WOULD BE USEFUL AND HE HOPED I WOULD DO SO. HE OBSERVED THAT THEY HAD RECENTLY COMBINED TOURISM AND FOREIGN INVESTMENT INTO ONE DEPARTMENT

DIRECTLY UNDER HIM WHICH WAS INTENDED TO MAKE INVESTMENT EASIER THAN BEFORE. I RESPONDED AFFIRMATIVELY, BUT CAUTIONED THAT FOR A NUMBER OF REASONS WE COULD NOT EXPECT MUCH AMERICAN INVESTMENT. ONE OR TWO MODEST ENTERPRISES MIGHT CONCEIVABLY EMERGE WITH AN OPIC AGREEMENT, THOUGH ONE COULD NEVER BE CERTAIN. BUT WITHOUT ONE, I WAS SURE NO SERIOUS FIRMS COULD BE LURED TO INVEST SO FAR AWAY.

8. IN REGARD TO HIS GOVERNMENT'S FURTHER DEVELOPMENT PLANS, HE POINTED OUT THAT IMPROVING THE AIRSTRIP HAS NOW HIGHEST PRIORITY. WITH DOLLARS TEN MILLION FROM KUWAIT DEVELOPMENT FUND, AN INDIAN CONSTRUCTION COMPANY ADVISED BY WEST GERMANS IN BEGINNING TO EXTEND AND STRENGTHEN
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RUNWAY TO TAKE 747'S, PERMITTING FAR EASIER ACCESS TO CHARTER TOURS. IN THIS CONNECTION I QUERIED WHETHER GAN WOULD BECOME A MAJOR TOURIST CENTER AND EXPRESSED APPRECIATION FOR HIS NOT HAVING LEASED IT TO "OUR SOVIET FRIENDS." HE RESPONDED BY SAYING THAT HE HAD CAREFULLY CONSIDERED THEIR OFFER AND DECIDED THAT THE NEXT GENERATION WOULD NOT APPROVE OF ANY OTHER DECISION THAN A REJECTION, AND THE SAME DECISION WOULD APPLY TO A REQUEST FROM ANY POWER. (F.Y.I., SWEDISH AMBASSADOR ROSIO TAKES SERIOUSLY A LOCAL RUMOR THAT THE INDIANS HAD RECENTLY SOUGHT THE RIGHT TO USE GAN AS A TOURIST CENTER BUT SINCE THEY SENT MAINLY ARMY OFFICERS TO NEGOTIATE, THE DEAL FELL THROUGH. I REMAIN SKEPTICAL BUT WILL EXPLORE WHILE HERE.)

9. ACTION REQUESTED: (A) PLEASE MOVE FORWARD AS APPROPRIATE ON MS. RASHEEDA DIDI'S SECURITY CLEARANCE WHEN FORMS NOW BEING FILLED OUT BY HER ARRIVE; (B) ENCOURAGE NEXT OPIC VISITOR TO THIS REGION TO VISIT SRI LANKA AND MALDIVES FOR CONSULTATION IN COLOMBO AND CAREFUL EXPLANATION OF OPIC AGREEMENT IN MALE.

10. COMMENT: NEVER BEFORE HAS MALE ATTRACTED SO MANY AMBASSADORS FOR INDEPENDENCE DAY CELEBRATION AS THIS YEAR; INSTEAD OF THE USUAL THREE, SOME DOZEN ARE SAID TO BE HERE. THE MALDIVIANS ARE DELIGHTED AND CLEARLY FEEL THERE IS SAFETY AND VISIBILITY IN NUMBERS SO THAT NO ONE SINGLE STATE CAN PULL A FAST ONE UNNOTICED. I SHALL HAVE MORE TO REPORT ON MY RETURN TO COLOMBO APRIL 3.
DEBOLD

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